

Supplemental Report: Pet Licensing Public Awareness and Outreach

Date: June 24, 2025

To: City Council

From: Executive Director, Municipal Licensing and Standards

Wards: All

SUMMARY

This supplemental report responds to direction from General Government Committee given as part of its deliberation of [2025.GG22.11](#) - Non-Competitive Contract with DocuPet Inc., for the Provision of Pet Licensing Services to report on current and future pet licensing public awareness efforts and resources, including mobile pet licensing outreach.

Toronto Municipal Code [Chapter 349, Animals](#), establishes rules and regulations for responsible pet ownership in the City, including a requirement for every owner of a dog or cat to obtain a pet licence. Pet licences help identify missing pets and return them to their owner so that these animals spend less time in a shelter and they allow members of the public and City staff to easily identify the owners of pets in the City. Revenue from pet licensing fees, as well as additional donations received during the pet licensing process, is used to fund Toronto Animal Services' programs, including spay/neuter programs, veterinary care and the rescue of sick, injured or distressed domestic animals and wildlife

Municipal Licensing and Services, through Toronto Animal Services, takes a multi-pronged approach to increasing awareness and uptake of pet licensing. This approach includes public communication efforts about the benefits of pet licensing, an incentive program to provide discounts for licensed pet owners at animal-related businesses and attendance at events for in-person outreach. Municipal Licensing and Services is continuing to explore opportunities to increase public awareness and encourage greater uptake of pet licensing.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Executive Director, Municipal Licensing and Standards recommends that:

1. City Council receive this report for information

FINANCIAL IMPACT

There are no financial impacts resulting from the recommendation in this report.

The Chief Financial Officer and Treasurer has reviewed this report and agrees with the financial implications as identified in the Financial Impact section.

DECISION HISTORY

At its meeting on June 16, 2025, General Government Committee adopted 2025.GG22.11 - Non-Competitive Contract with DocuPet Inc., for the Provision of Pet Licensing Services and directed the Executive Director, Municipal Licensing and Standards to report directly to City Council on current and future pet licensing public awareness efforts and resources, including mobile pet licensing outreach.

<https://secure.toronto.ca/council/agenda-item.do?item=2025.GG22.11>

COMMENTS

Toronto Municipal Code Chapter 349, Animals, establishes rules and regulations for responsible pet ownership in the City, including a requirement for every owner of a dog or cat to obtain a pet licence. Pet licences help identify missing pets and return them to their owner so that these animals spend less time in a shelter and they allow members of the public and City staff to easily identify the owners of pets in the City. Revenue from pet licensing fees, as well as additional donations received during the pet licensing process, is used to fund Toronto Animal Services' programs, including spay/neuter programs, veterinary care and the rescue of sick, injured or distressed domestic animals and wildlife

While it is unknown exactly how many pets currently reside in Toronto, recent estimates have suggested there could be as many as 600,000 in the city. As of June 2025, there were approximately 65,000 pet licences issued. Municipal Licensing and Standards, through Toronto Animal Services (TAS), is taking a multi-pronged approach to increasing awareness and uptake of pet licensing. This approach includes public communication efforts about the benefits of pet licensing, an incentive program to provide discounts for licensed pet owners at animal-related businesses, and attendance at events for in-person outreach.

Improving Pet Licensing Uptake through DocuPet

Through the current pet licensing pilot program, DocuPet has provided marketing services related to pet licensing on behalf of the City and will continue to do so under the proposed new contract. These services have included the development of printed materials about pet licensing (which are distributed to vet clinics and pet stores), social media marketing campaigns, and pet licensing incentive offers, where specialty designed pet tags were offered at no cost to new pet licence applicants for a limited period of time.

In addition to marketing, transitioning pet licensing onto DocuPet has improved the customer experience and made it easier to apply for or renew an existing pet licence. Introducing a streamlined online application portal and allowing for emailed notices of renewal, where previously renewal notices were all delivered through Canada Post, has improved the process and increased the rate of licence issuance. Toronto Animal Services will continue to collaborate with DocuPet and explore opportunities to enhance this service, including reviewing the feasibility of introducing cell phone text notifications as an additional method of informing pet owners that they need to renew their pet licence.

Toronto Animal Services Marketing and Outreach

In addition to the services provided by DocuPet, the City conducts outreach and communicates directly with pet owners to enhance awareness of the benefits of pet licensing. The City's [website about pet licensing](#) explains the benefits of pet licensing, provides details about the different methods to purchase a licence, and provides information about the City's BluePaw Rewards Program.

The [BluePaw Rewards Program](#) is a partnership between the City of Toronto and various pet-related businesses that incentivizes pet licensing through the provision of discounts to owners of licensed pets. There is no cost to the City to operate BluePaw nor is there a fee for the participating businesses to be included in the program. Discounts to owners of licensed pets are provided by participating businesses for pet-related services like grooming, pet food and pet photography. The City is exploring opportunities to expand the BluePaw program to provide discounts at more businesses and to increase public awareness of the program through concerted marketing and communication efforts.

By transitioning to DocuPet through the pilot program, 1 FTE who was previously working on pet licensing administration has been reallocated within Toronto Animal Services to provide a dedicated focus on social media for TAS programs, including pet licensing. Toronto Animal Services is exploring future opportunities for a paid marketing and advertising campaign dedicated to increasing uptake of pet licensing.

Public Education and Advertising Campaigns

In addition to the City's pet licensing website, which to date in 2025 has had 33,212 visits, the City also conducts public education campaigns related to responsible pet ownership and pet licensing. In 2025 the City has two different campaigns related to responsible pet ownership and pet licensing, with an estimated spend of \$356,000. First, in May 2025 a campaign focused on highlighting the importance of pet licensing via pet influencers on social media was conducted, generating approximately 88,000 impressions. Second, in June the annual Responsible Dog Ownership and Leash Your Dog campaign, which also includes messaging related to pet licensing, was launched. This campaign is currently ongoing and will be in market until August 2025. In addition to these two campaigns, the City regularly runs organic social media posts about pet licensing; so far in 2025, 15 posts have been made with a total of 97,443 impressions.

In-Person Outreach and Events

Throughout the year, Toronto Animal Services staff attend multiple in-person community events to conduct direct public outreach about various TAS programs, including shelter

and adoption services, spay/neuter clinics, wildlife management and pet licensing. At these events, TAS staff speak to residents, distribute written materials and have opportunities to assist owners obtain a pet licence online, where needed. TAS has a banner sign specific to pet licensing that is displayed at such events, which includes a QR code that leads residents directly to DocuPet. So far in 2025, TAS has promoted DocuPet and pet licensing at six different community events and is anticipating attending another 10-15 events by the end of the year.

Animal control officers, through the course of their activities, regularly encounter pet owners, and provide direct education to residents about pet licensing requirements, when encountering unlicensed pets. Signage in parks related to dog off-leash areas also inform pet owners about the need for their dog to have a municipal licence on their collar.

As part of its public outreach strategy, TAS operates two different mobile clinics for dog and cat owners located in Neighbourhood Improvement Areas across the City: the Chip Truck and the SNYP (Spay/Neuter Your Pet) Truck.

The Chip Truck provides low-cost microchips and rabies vaccines for cats and dogs in Toronto. In addition to operation in neighbourhoods, it can also attend community events. The Chip Truck typically offers ten clinics a year, seeing 50-75 clients per clinic.

The SNYP truck is a mobile veterinary clinic that provides opportunities for residents to get their pets spayed or neutered. The SNYP truck typically operates 3 days a week and can accommodate 15 clients per spay/neuter clinic. Additionally, the SNYP truck operates a general pet wellness clinic once a month, accommodating 30 clients per visit, focusing on providing general veterinary service for residents who may not typically be able to afford a visit to a private veterinary clinic.

Any resident who lives in these neighbourhoods can use the services of either the Chip Truck or the SNYP Truck, and there are opportunities for fee subsidies or waivers for residents with a household income of \$50,000 or less. Pets that access these services are required to be licensed, and these mobile clinics offer opportunities for staff to increase public awareness about pet licensing. Should a client with an unlicensed pet attend a clinic, staff will assist them in obtaining a licence for their pet, including reviewing whether they are eligible for a waived or subsidized pet licence fee.

Opportunities for Future Public Outreach

Toronto Animal Services is continuing to explore opportunities to expand in-person outreach and increase public awareness of pet licensing and its other services. Toronto Animal Services recently received grant funding from PetSmart Charities to expand pet wellness clinics operated out of the SNYP Truck, with a specific focus on supporting indigenous pet owners; it is expected that these new wellness clinics will begin operating monthly in the summer of 2025. Should the contract with DocuPet be approved, TAS would be able to reallocate additional resources that are currently dedicated to pet licensing administration to supporting outreach and educational efforts, including the Chip and SNYP Trucks.

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SIGNATURE



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